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PREPARING THE MODERN CHRISTMAS DINNER

An interview between Mrs. Rowena Schmidt Carpenter, Mrs. Fanny Walker Yeatman, and Miss Rosemary Loughlin, Bureau of Home Economics, delivered through WRC and 39 other radio stations associated with the National Broadcasting Company, December 16, 1930.

MRS. CARPENTER:

How do you do, Homemakers! If you tuned in at this time yesterday, you heard Mr. Potts of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics tell how to select turkey according to grade. I am sure you formed a real picture in your mind of the bird you will buy for your Christmas dinner, because Mr. Potts described the government standards so clearly. And close on the heels of selecting the turkey, we are following with suggestions for preparing it. Two of our nutrition specialists from the Bureau, Mrs. Yeatman and Miss Loughlin, are with me today. When we get all through with our suggestions we will repeat the menu, so you can jot it down if it appeals to you.

Just how to start off a holiday dinner is always a question. There are people who never want anything to precede the turkey course. And for the informal family dinner, prepared and served with no outside help, it is perfectly suitable to bring on the turkey at once. But those of you who want your dinner just a bit more elaborate, or who feel the need of an appetizer may begin with a first course that really tempts the appetite. It can't be anything rich or filling; it might be a fruit cup, an oyster cocktail, or a clear soup, or a twangy, spicy tomato cocktail. Vegetable cocktails are quite the fashion now, brimful of vitamins and minerals as they are, and tomato cocktail is sure to whet the appetite. Since it is one of Mrs. Yeatman's specialties this year, I shall let her tell you how to make it.

MRS. YEATMAN:

First let me add some other points in favor of tomato cocktail: It can be prepared a day or two ahead of time and put in the refrigerator all ready to serve. And its lovely red color makes it especially suitable at this season. With finely chopped parsley sprinkled on top, tomato cocktail is a real Yuletide concoction! I will give you the recipe for ten or twelve people:

2 quarts canned tomatoes	2 teaspoons onion pulp
4 stalks celery, chopped	2 teaspoons horseradish
1 green pepper, chopped	4 tablespoons tomato catsup.
2 teaspoons salt	

Boil the tomatoes, celery, pepper, and salt for about five minutes, and rub through a sieve that is fine enough to keep back the seeds. To the tomato juice and pulp add the catsup, onion, and horseradish. A little lemon juice is a

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good addition if the tomatoes are not very acid. Stir the mixture well, and put in a cold place to chill. Beat before serving, and pour into small glasses. This is our first suggestion for your Christmas dinner if you want an appetizer as the starter.

MRS. CARPENTER:

I think we all will, Mrs. Yeatman, after hearing about tomato cocktail. Olives and celery would be nice with that course or some time during the dinner, so we might as well decide on them now. They can be all ready in the refrigerator, too, so our plans so far have not interfered with the fun of Christmas morning.

And now the turkey. You will need a medium sized bird, from 12 to 15 pounds dressed weight, for a group of twelve. That is an economical size to buy anyway, because there is less bone waste in proportion to weight than in a smaller one. Mrs. Yeatman will tell you how to prepare it.

MRS. YEATMAN:

Of course the most important step in preparing the turkey after it is dressed, is to remove the pin feathers carefully and thoroughly. Sometimes singeing is helpful. Then wash and dry it both inside and out, and fill with stuffing. We think dry stuffing best. This is one of our favorite recipes:

Chestnut Stuffing

12 to 15 pound young turkey	1/4 cup chopped parsley
1 pound large chestnuts	2 cups chopped celery and tops
1/2 cup butter, or 1/4 cup	2 teaspoons salt
butter and 1/4 cup turkey	1/4 teaspoon pepper
fat	1 teaspoon savory seasoning
1/2 cup minced onion	6 cups fine, dry bread crumbs.

Cook the chestnuts in boiling water to cover for 20 minutes, remove the shell and brown skin while hot, and chop into medium-sized pieces. Melt the butter in a skillet, cook the onion, parsley, and celery for two or three minutes, and stir frequently. Combine the bread crumbs, chestnuts, salt, pepper, and savory seasoning, add to the celery mixture, and stir until thoroughly mixed and hot. Sprinkle the inside of the turkey with salt, and fill but do not pack with the hot stuffing. Putting the stuffing in while hot helps to heat the turkey through quickly as it roasts. After it is stuffed and trussed, rub the surface with butter, sprinkle with salt, pepper, and flour, lay a piece of fat over the breast-bone, and put it in the roaster. If you select a plump, fat, tender bird, it can be cooked on a rack in an open roasting pan. If you aren't very sure about the quality of your turkey, I suggest a covered roaster, also equipped with a rack, and recommend that you use a very small quantity of water on the bottom of the pan. It may be necessary to remove the cover toward the end to allow the turkey to brown.

In my experience a turkey weighing 12 to 15 pounds will take from 3 to 3-1/2 hours to roast. Have the oven very hot the first half hour, and then reduce to moderate heat. If you have an oven thermometer, put your turkey in at 450 degrees F., and reduce the temperature after 30 minutes to 350 degrees F. An important thing to watch in roasting turkey is not to overcook the breast while getting the thick part of the legs done. Sometimes it is a help to turn the turkey on each side once during the roasting. And I think, too, that the old fashioned basting is still a good practice, especially if an uncovered pan is used. I test for doneness by piercing the inside of one of the thighs as it lies nearest the breast; if the juice does not show a red tinge the turkey is done.

MRS. CARPENTER:

I did not want to interrupt you until you had finished telling about the turkey, but I did want to ask two questions about the stuffing: if chestnuts are not to my family's liking, could I leave them out and still use that dry stuffing recipe? Also, could the stuffing be made the day before to save time Christmas morning?

MRS. YEATMAN:

Yes is my answer to both. If you leave the chestnuts out you had better add two more cups of dry bread crumbs, making eight cups altogether. And you may have to increase the seasonings just a little. About fixing it ahead of time. That is a good idea, but in that case you would not heat the stuffing after adding the bread crumbs. Put it in the turkey cold the day before, and store the stuffed turkey in the refrigerator overnight.

MRS. CARPENTER:

And now, homemakers, I am leaving the turkey to you and Mrs. Yeatman! Miss Loughlin is ready to give you her suggestions about the vegetables. Since you haven't heard from Miss Loughlin before, let me tell you that she is working on vegetable cookery in our Bureau. Miss Loughlin, what vegetables shall we have for Christmas?

MISS LOUGHLIN:

Well, though this is a MODERN Christmas dinner we are preparing, Mrs. Carpenter, I am afraid I must suggest a few traditional dishes, because no turkey dinner would seem quite right without them. Mashed potatoes for instance, and giblet gravy; and cranberries, as a sauce or a jolly. Rutabagas or turnips, too, standbys in the winter, just seem to belong in the Christmas menu. Then for color and flavor, as well as balance in nutritive value, I'd suggest broccoli, that new, green first cousin of cauliflower. If you can't find broccoli on your market, green beans will do as well, and you are sure to get them fresh or canned.

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MRS. CARPENTER:

You spoke first of mashed potatoes. I wish you would tell us that delicious way you fix them in the laboratory, and then give us special hints on fixing the broccoli, and the rutabagas. And suggest a salad and dessert.

MISS LOUGHLIN:

The potato recipe isn't new or original with me, but I'm glad to recommend it. I just fix mashed potatoes in the usual way, beating them plenty after adding the milk and butter so they are quite creamy, and then I pile them lightly in an uncovered buttered baking dish and put them in the oven while the dinner is finishing. They are nice because of the brown crust that forms on top, but their special virtue for a large group is that they keep piping hot while the turkey is being carved.

My only special hint about the broccoli is to cut it in such a way that the flower buds will not cook to pieces while the stalks are getting tender. After removing and discarding the large leaves, I slice the stalk so as to include some bud portion with a thin slice of stalk. Sliced this way broccoli cooks nicely in 20 to 25 minutes. I use boiling salted water and an uncovered pan, to preserve the green color.

If you decide on the rutabagas or turnips, you will find them delicious either creamed or mashed and buttered.

For salad with such a big dinner, I suggest lettuce with French dressing, or if you prefer, a mixture of such salad greens as endive, water cress, and lettuce. That may leave a little room for dessert! Nothing takes the place of plum pudding at Christmas, served with hard sauce or with a simple ice cream. I shall include the Bureau's recipe, in case you want to try it:

Plum Pudding

1 pound beef, suet, ground	9 eggs
1 pound sugar	2 teaspoons salt
1 pound flour	4 teaspoons baking powder
1 pound seedless raisins	6 teaspoons cinnamon
3/4 pound citron, cut fine	4 teaspoons cloves
1 cup pecan nut meats, cut fine	4 teaspoons mace
1 cup English walnut meats, cut fine	4 teaspoons nutmeg
	2 teaspoons allspice
	1 cup cider.

Mix the ground suet with the sugar. Mix the fruit and nuts with half of the flour. Beat the egg yolks and whites separately. Add the yolks to the suet and sugar, then the fruit and the nuts. Sift together twice the salt, baking powder, spices, and remaining flour. Add these ingredients to the first mixture, alternately with the cider. Fold in the egg whites and mix well. Grease seven No. 2 tin cans and partly fill with the pudding mixture, cover loosely with the

can tops to prevent condensed moisture from settling on the pudding, and steam for 3 hours. The pudding will keep for weeks if the cans are covered with paper or with the loose can tops. Before serving set the can of pudding on a rack in boiling water for about an hour to heat through, loosen with a knife, and turn out on a platter.

Hard sauce made of butter and sugar creamed together is good with this pudding. If a hard sauce that is a little different is desired, flavor with the grated rind of an orange. Any one of the liquid or foamy sauces is also suitable with plum pudding. Some people like best of all to serve a spoonful of vanilla ice cream or mousse on the plate with the hot pudding.

MRS. CARPENTER:

And now you have our suggestions for your Christmas dinner. Let me repeat the menu:

Tomato cocktail - Celery - Olives

Roast turkey with chestnut stuffing - Cranberry sauce

Mashed potatoes and giblet gravy - Rutabagas or Turnips in cream

Broccoli or String Beans

Salad greens with French Dressing

Plum pudding - Coffee

If you want a copy of this program before Christmas because of the recipes it contains, write direct to the Radio Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.

Merry Christmas, Homemakers!
